An Abenaki Women

My mom is an only child born to a full blooded Native American (my grandfather) and a French Canadian women (my grandmother). Their marriage was strictly forbidden – social norms. She was born on the Odanak Reservation in the Quebec area of Canada. My mom and grandparents migrated to Waterbury, Connecticut for economic purposes. At that time, Waterbury was the brass capitol of the world, plenty of jobs to be had.

My mom has very bad memories of her time on the reservation. This was especially true with large populations dealing with alcoholism. This is true with my grandfather. My mom never drank, ever. She associated the reservation with this family/social problem. When she arrived in Waterbury she attend school and entered grade 1, she was retained in first grade because she could not speak English. As we were growing up, my mom and grandmother always spoke French to each other. My brothers and sisters and I were never taught French as my Mom felt it would hurt our education as she experienced.

My mom migrated to the US back in the time where all migrants worked hard to lose their cultural identity and be Americans, as she did. She is still in Waterbury where “her” family is. She has only returned to the reservation two times that I am aware of. The first was to bury my grandfather and the second time was to bring my brothers and sisters and I which was about 7 years ago.